

THE GAS MOVEMENT.

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES.

PREVIOUS to offering a few observations on the purification of gas and its domestic and other uses, as already promised, we may in the meantime remark, that the rudiments of an anticipated metropolitan association for the reduction of the price of gas may be said to have assumed something like a definite form,—although as yet but a gentle, inefficient, and embryonic one,—since the publication of our last article, when one of the members of a committee at Camberwell, in thanking us for the information given by *THE BUILDER*, announced to us the design of the committee to endeavour to induce the gas companies of the southern districts of the metropolis, including Southwark and Camberwell, to reduce their prices at least to the average of the other metropolitan companies, if not to that of many provincial towns, which are supplied with gas so much lower than the metropolitan companies are charging. A preliminary meeting was accordingly held, and afterwards a more matured association of gas consumers met at the Elephant and Castle, when much statistical and other information, most of it already incorporated in our continued series of papers on this subject, was brought forward in support of their, as yet, far too moderate demands,—or rather expectations, though in all probability they are the utmost thus realizable in the outset, from the mere voluntary offering of the companies themselves. A resolution was then moved by Mr. E. Chamberlain, seconded by Mr. J. Savage, and unanimously agreed to, “That, in the opinion of this meeting, 6s. per thousand cubic feet is a remunerative price for the companies supplying the southern portion of the metropolis with gas, and that such being the case, a deputation be formed to wait on them, and request them to reduce their price accordingly,” representing to them at same time, that the increased consumption would more than compensate for the apparent loss. A deputation, consisting of Messrs. Jones, Chamberlain, Kenyon, Pash, Sinclair, Thwaites, Ward, Stagg, Mitchell, Wain, and Hodges, was then appointed, and a vote of thanks returned to Mr. Browne, the chairman, when the meeting separated. The Southampton new Company’s bill will positively be resumed by the old promoters, in the forthcoming session of Parliament, where the great battle must be fought. The shares have already been largely taken up, even as far off as Edinburgh, where there is now to some extent a practical knowledge of the endless expansibility of gas, according to the opening up of domestic and other space for its diffusion, by a diminution of its cost, and an increase of its purity, and where there is consequently a well-founded expectation of an equivalent increase of permanent profits to shareholders themselves from an inexhaustible source. At Keswick a most commendable and exemplary movement has been made by the gentry for the exemption from gas rate of not less than two hundred of the poorer class of the inhabitants. At Romney, lately, the Lighting Commissioners resolved to resist the exorbitant charges made by the gas company for lighting the town, even though to some extent reduced, so that the fear of darkness through the winter was before the eyes of the people in that quarter: we have not yet heard of the more immediate result. Further extensions and improvements of works, in consequence of great and increasing demands, induced even by the partial moderation of old prices, have been going on in various quarters, as at Worcester, Manchester, York, Whitehaven, &c.; and gas is also pushing its way into more of those primitive places where, diffusive as it is, it had not hitherto penetrated. Such is about to be the case, too, at Malvern, and elsewhere. The masonry of the Shipley works is nearly completed, and Shipley will be ‘in the light’ in course of a month. The Manchester consumpt and profit are ever on the increase,—and the cost ever on the decrease,—even though the profits be there expended on magnificent improvements of the town itself. The yearly gas rental is now about 80,000*l.*, from which the town still derives the splendid profit of 37,000*l.* a year, although the price (5*s.*) has been 1*s.* 8*d.* below the average of forty-one English towns, viz., 6*s.* 8*d.*, and now appears

still further reduced to 4*s.* 8*d.* There are now nearly 10,000 gas tenants, and 110 miles of gas mains in Manchester. It appears that since our late exposure of the secrets of the gas-house at Wakefield and elsewhere—not a shadow of contradiction to which, in fact, has ever appeared, although, according to the organ of the companies themselves, that exposure has now been ‘published to the end of the world,’ and ‘read by all,’ to the ‘imminent danger’ of the ‘gas companies,’—various proprietors of establishments, such as those at Lincoln, alluded to by the *Stamford Mercury*, have prepared to erect apparatus of their own for the manufacture of their gas; and the proprietors of Vauxhall, also, taking the hint, at once erected a gas work of their own for filling their balloons, and at the very first off-go, nevertheless, saved 400*l.* out of 600*l.*—the quantity for which the gas companies charged 600*l.* costing them thus only 200*l.*—Some of the companies, too, it appears have been blaming their own ‘watchman,’—for his very fidelity in warning them of ‘coming events,’—“as being too truthful,—as revealing too much,” and thus creating “dissatisfaction and disaffection amongst the gas consumers;” and the proprietors of the publication have been hence obliged to furl their standard as a signal of defeat unless their blind and deaf supporters come to their senses: meriting the more far-seeing protector of monopoly only all the more sternly repeats his warning, that “if reductions be not voluntarily made, they will be forced, and that quickly, under serious disadvantages; and we repeat, says he, that “we fight not with shadows.” At one of the towns in Lincolnshire, it appears that gas is now admitted to be made at least as low as 1*s.* 6*d.* per 1,000 cubic feet. The Maidstone company, on the other hand, have graciously condescended to reduce their figure from 8*s.* 4*d.* to 7*s.* 6*d.*:—8*s.* 4*d.* to 7*s.* 4*d.* at once, would not have looked like close enough calculation and fractionizing of profits, we presume. There is some little ingenuity in this, as there is even in the 11*l.* 4*d.* haberdashery invention. It is clear that between Lincolnshire and Kent, the price of gas is far from having yet reached its level, and certainly that level is not to be traced on the banks of the Thames: But as all things tend to an equilibrium, so will gas now not be long, any more than water, in finding its ultimate level. At Harrogate, the level of this most anomalous fluid has just been reduced to the Maidstone maximum,—8*s.* 4*d.*! and, considering the temptation to purchase it probably now irresistible, the directors have forthwith ordered, “that service-pipes be laid by the company, through the walls, into private houses, shops, &c.” With a slight misgiving, however, of the public penetration, they have also resolved, “That 500 circulars be printed and distributed, describing the great advantage of gas over other lights.” Explosions of pent-up gas have not been unfrequent of late, and so wonder, seeing the embargo placed on its free diffusion by such stopcocks as those at Harrogate and elsewhere. Seriously, however, we have even heard of a prudent ‘consumer’ taking a lighted candle into his cellar to see where the gas ‘escaped so confoundedly!’ It would be well that more reliance were placed on the sense of smell than on that of vision, in such cases, at least in the first place. The beadle of Walsall Church was killed the other day, and damage to the extent of 1,000*l.* done to the church by such incautious conduct: and a servant girl lately made a parrot escape; but not without injury, in a cellar at Charles-street, Middlesex Hospital, in the very same way. The gas now distributed in the metropolis by some of the companies, by the way, is shamefully bad. Of this, however, anon.

CURIOUS DISCOVERY IN DURHAM CATHEDRAL.—In the course of the restorations going on here, a large fire-place and chimney, as we understand, have been discovered in the thickness of the wall, at the south-west corner of the south transept. The fire-place opened into the transept, and although not coeval with the Norman work in which it is formed, is at all events earlier than the beginning of the fifteenth century, provision having been made for the chimney of it in the cloisters begun at that time. Its purpose is doubtful.

RATING WATER COMPANIES.

MILE-END OLD TOWN AND THE EAST LONDON WATER COMPANY.

It appears from a report of a meeting of the inhabitants of Mile-end Old Town, recently held, to determine as to the rating of the East London Water Company, that the parish have obtained a decision of the Court of Queen’s Bench in their favour, and which defines the principle on which the company was to be rated to be on the net residue of its yearly receipts, after making certain deductions specified on the award.

Mr. Morse, one of the speakers, after referring to the decision of the Court of Queen’s Bench on the subject, and stating it to be the principle on which they were to rate the company, referred to the yearly receipts and expenditure of the company as shewn in the documents produced, while the suit was pending in the Queen’s Bench. From these it appeared that the receipts amounted to 54,000*l.*, and the expenditure to 18,000*l.*, leaving a balance of 36,000*l.*, but from which they were entitled in terms of said decision to deduct 12,000*l.* more, which left a net balance of 24,000*l.* to be rated for, and which, according to the principle proceeded upon, would yield a rental of 3,982*l.* He, therefore, moved, that in consequence of the decision of the Queen’s Bench, it be recommended to the overseers to raise the rate of the company from 1,473*l.*, against which they complained three years ago, to 3,982*l.*

This was carried unanimously; but Mr. Head, the churchwarden, who was in the chair, was empowered to accept any liberal offer from the company, to prevent further litigation.

THE DECORATIONS OF THE ROYAL LYCEUM THEATRE.

In accordance with our promise last week, we now give a view of the Lyceum Theatre, as decorated for Mr. Charles Mathews by Mr. Bradwell. It will be found to agree in every respect with our detailed account of the arrangements last week, which, as that was written before any part of the applied decorations were fixed, says something at all events for our care. The front of the dress-circle, however, is more fully ornamented than was then intended, a continued festoon with birds and squirrels, having been introduced in addition to the scroll; and, singularly enough, this is, perhaps, less satisfactory than any other part; there being rather too much “flurry,” so to speak, caused by the number and size of the birds.

The effect of the whole, as we supposed it would be, is exceedingly charming, and reflects the greatest credit on all concerned. The excellent modelling and finish of the ornaments, forcibly brought forward as they are, are very striking, and tend materially to produce that degree of completeness and elegance which characterise the house.

The new act drop painted by Mr. Beverly, to whose rising abilities as a scene painter we referred some time ago, accords well with the general design. Two sweeps of massive red drapery, boldly handled, looped up, disclose beneath, satin tapestry with mythological groups; the large folds in the centre of this were better out than in, but the drop nevertheless claims high praise for most artist-like treatment. The scenery in Mr. Planché’s excellent little piece “The Pride of the Market,” with which the house opened on Monday last, fully justifies our good opinion of the painter.

In the Queen’s box, Mr. Bradwell has ornamented the ceiling with a painting of the Genius of Britain rewarding Architecture, Painting, Sculpture, and Music.

* The adoption of our accounts and opinions by the majority of our contemporaries of the press always gives us pleasure, honourably acknowledged as the manner usually is. To two or three, who on their own account have forgotten to add the word *Builder* to the article, we are less obliged.